

## **Stakeholder's Roles and Responsibilities in the Community-Based Forest Management Program of the Philippines**

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This paper reviews the existing social and community forestry programs in the Philippines, these being the leading programs for natural resource management and rural development in the country. The paper takes the form of a stakeholder analysis of those involved in the Community-Based Forest Management Program, drawing on literature discussing the roles of and challenges faced by the various stakeholder groups and on interviews with participants in the program. Challenges to the success of the program come from a variety of sources, in particular from the economically and socially marginalised position of the target communities, lack of resources available to support them, deficiencies in physical and social infrastructure in the Philippines, and the difficulties caused by the continual revision of forestry policies and regulations. It is concluded that in order for CBFM to be successful, greater efforts are needed to 'empower' the communities, provide adequate budgetary support to agencies administering the program, and provide a stable policy and regulatory framework.

**Keywords:** community forestry, stakeholder analysis, forest policy, smallholder forestry

### **INTRODUCTION**

Philippine governments have been experimenting with social and community forestry programs for more than 30 years. The community-based forest management programs have been designed to encourage revegetation for a number of reasons, including the conservation of biodiversity, stabilisation of soils, diversification of agriculture and supply of timber. The programs are supposed to provide a mechanism for the granting of tenure security to households that utilise land officially classified as public forest land. The rationale of this approach is that once communities and households that use forest lands are given security of property rights to these lands and forests, they will work to manage them sustainably for the benefit of both their communities and society at large. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities are recognised as major impediments to the protection of remaining natural and residual forests (DENR 1990).

The Philippine national constitution of 1987 requires that natural resources can only be exploited or developed through joint ventures, co-management and co-

production agreements between local communities and the government or private organisations. The Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program was created in 1995 and upgraded in 1996 to become the 'the national strategy to achieve sustainable forestry and social justice' (Executive Order 263: Section 1). It has become the 'flagship program' for community forestry, replacing the Integrated Social Forestry Program agreements and other people-orientated forestry programs (Tesoro 1999). The core objectives of the CBFM program are to democratise forest resource access, improve the socio-economic welfare of upland communities, and promote the sustainability of upland resources (Pulhin 1998). The motto of the community forestry or people-orientated forestry programs is 'people first and sustainable forestry will follow' (DENR 1998).

In the first section of this paper briefly describes the Philippine CBFM program. The next examines the stakeholders involved in community forestry programs, their potential roles, and the main constraints to their participation. A summary of the challenges facing community forestry programs is then presented.

## **PHILIPPINE COMMUNITY BASED FORESTRY PROGRAMS**

There are 10 sub-programs under the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program, including the Ancestral Domain program (Tesoro 1999). Three main types of agreement are used to formalise community forest management and provide security of tenure to communities to utilise the resources in forest areas. In terms of area covered, the most important instruments are the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claims (CADC) and the Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA). In terms of the number of agreements, the main types are the Certificates of Stewardship and Certificates of Forest Stewardship issued under the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP) because these have been issued to individuals and households, whereas the other agreements are issued to whole communities (La Vina 1999, Guiang 2001b). The CBFM agreements provide the communities with guaranteed tenure over the land for a period of 25 years, and this is renewable for a further 25 years if the certificate holder meets the conditions of the program. Certificate of Stewardship and Certificate of Forest Stewardship agreements that were issued under the ISFP were transferred to and replaced by CBFMAs in 1996.

Most CBFM areas are divided into a number of zones by management plans that provide various resource-use rights for the community. These zones may include a 'protection' zone, where no harvesting of timber products is allowed but some non-timber products can be harvested sustainably, a 'limited use' zone that buffers the protection zone where some portion of the timber may be harvested, and a 'production' zone where timber harvesting is permitted.

An integral part of the CBFM program is the use of community organisers (COs), who are employed to help establish and maintain community organisations and who are critical in assisting the community organisations to comply with their forestry contracts. The CO role includes facilitating the formation of people's organisations and providing advice about the preparation of the plans and applications for permits required to establish and later harvest planted areas. The COs role is also to build the capacity of communities to establish sustainable enterprises and community forestry

programs usually involve some 'livelihood' component to provide participants with some immediate income.

While in the ISFP individual households could take up a Certificate of Stewardship agreement over a small land parcel, the majority of agreements have required that to be eligible for an agreement, the community establish or adapt a people's organisation. The community organisation and partner (usually the DENR) sign a profit-sharing agreement to cover the distribution of revenues from harvests. The DENR usually provides the planting materials (or technical knowledge for nursery development) and funding for the maintenance of plantings. The DENR has utilised grants and loans from international lending and aid institutions, including the Asian Development Bank and USAID, to fund the CBFM program. More details are provided about the history and current operation of Philippine community based forestry programs in Harrison S. *et al.* (this issue).

## STAKEHOLDER ROLES IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAMS

There are a number of stakeholders involved in Philippines community forestry programs. These various groups, their potential roles in community forestry programs and examples of institutions are summarised in Table 1. At the centre of the community-based forestry programs are people's organisations. Their role and those of the other stakeholders are examined in the following sections.

### The Role of Community Organisations

Communities are required to form community organisations to be eligible to enter into a CBFMA and gain access to the CBFM program supports. The functions of community organisations include:

- providing a legal entity that can enter into contracts with partners;
- providing a point of entry to communities for the provision of training and funds;
- providing a forum for the resolution of disputes within the community;
- ensuring equitable sharing of resources within the community following the signing of a CBFMA; and
- providing community members with training in organisational, financial and enterprise management.

In some cases, the communities already have cooperatives for buying, marketing or processing agricultural produce, and these organisations can register as a people's organisation to apply for a CBFMA. Where the agreements cover cleared land, the people's organisation is usually contracted under the agreement with the DENR to plant the cleared area, a task for which they receive payment. This provides the community organisation with a source of funds that can be paid to members involved in the planting activities, or used to build up funds for later investment in forestry or non-forestry livelihood projects. Examples of community non-forestry investments include fishponds, health service infrastructure, market access improvement, livestock raising and purchase of agricultural processing equipment.

**Table 1.** Stakeholders involved in community forestry programs in the Philippines, their roles and examples of existing institutions

Stakeholder group	Roles	Institutions
Community members or households, community organisations	Beneficiaries Labour providers Holders of 'local knowledge' Land and forest management Community development	People's organisations Community organisations
Department of Environment and Natural Resources	Provision of information and capital Land management regulation Community development	Department of Environment and Natural Resources national and provincial offices
Other national government departments	Land management regulation Provision of information Land management	Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Reform
Local Government Units	Administration of land management regulations Provision of information and capital Community development Infrastructure development	Local (municipal) Government Units
Non-Government Organisations	Provision of information Development of sustainable land management systems Community capacity building Legal and political advocacy for communities Source of funds	> 5,000 registered NGOs in the Philippines
Aid agencies	Capital Provision of information Advocacy for institutional reforms	World Bank, Asian Development Bank, USAID, Ford Foundation, UNFAO
Timber industry	Markets for timber products Provision of information Capital for plantation establishment and maintenance	
Universities	Analysis of programs Provision of information on all aspects of programs Development of sustainable land management systems	University of the Philippines Los Baños, Leyte State University, Ateneo de Manila IPC, de la Salle University and others
NGO Research agencies	Provision of information Development of sustainable land management systems	Foundation Centre Incorporated, Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Centre and others
International research bodies	Provision of information Analysis of programs Development of sustainable land management systems	ACIAR, CIFOR, GTZ, ICRAF, SEARCA and others

Another way that CBFM projects provide income from limited production and protection zones is through the harvest of non-timber forest products. Common examples in reforested areas or remnant forests, are the under-planting of rattan (*Calamus spp.*) and abaca (*Musa textilis*) which can be harvested for use in furniture manufacture or fibre production while retaining the tree cover.

The difficulty involved in ensuring that communities form and maintain community organisations is widely recognised. Community groups are potentially the weakest link in the CBFM program, the success of community forestry being heavily dependent on building a community's capacity to develop and manage a collective resource (Bisson *et al.* 1997, Pulhin 1998, Donoghue 1999, La Vina 1999, Guiang 2001a and b). Many of the communities involved in the CBRMP have low literacy levels, lack financial resources and do not have a history of utilising resources in a collective manner (Donoghue 1999).

Community organisers contracted from 'assisting organisations' are a standard part of CBFM projects. Some CBFM sub-programs use community organisers from NGOs and the USAID funded Natural Resource Management Projects (NRMP), while others use DENR or LGU personnel. Early community forestry schemes were criticised for not paying enough attention to the formation of community groups or community capacity building (UNAC 1992). Community organising is expensive and time consuming. The pilot contracts for the CBFM program initially employed community organisers for three years but in 1996 this was reduced to one year with the possibility of renewal (Donoghue 1999). The present contract terms for community organisers are for two years (Estoria 2004).

One factor that has been identified as restricting the success of CBFMAs and other community forestry programs elsewhere is the failure of many assisting organisations to take account of the diversity of socio-economic circumstances within communities (Raintree 1987, 1991, Bisson *et al.* 1997, Pulhin 1998, Donoghue 1999, Contreras 2000). Pulhin quoted Cernea (1992) as stating:

Entrusting a social forestry program (and development programs in general) to the wrong social actor will lead to the failure of the program, as in fact has happened repeatedly . . . Some statements or articles are repeating the term *community forestry* from title to end, hundreds of times as mantra, without once bothering to discuss what specific social groups, strata, or classes compose this mythical 'community'...it is necessary to de-segregate the broad term *people* and identify precisely which unit of social organisation can do aforestation, and which social units and definable groups can act as sustaining and enduring social structures for long-term production activities. (Pulhin 1998, p. 5).

Pulhin went on to comment that:

[s]ome CBFM projects in the Philippines would show that both the DENR field personnel and NGOs oftentimes regard the community as a homogenous grouping with similar interests. There is little if any conscious effort exerted on the identification of the different interest groups, including those whose source of livelihood are mainly dependent on the local forest resources. This has contributed to the perpetuation and reproduction of inequity in terms of access to forest benefits in favour of the local elite. (Pulhin 1998, p.5).

Bisson *et al.* (1997), in reviewing the experiences of the USAID in over 100

CBFMAs, concluded that '[a]ssumptions about the heterogeneity of community interests, and therefore their unity of purpose and willingness to organise, did not hold true'. These authors then recommended to those involved in community forestry programs in the Philippines that they '[d]o not attempt to force an organisation where none exists. The time required to organise communities of people with heterogeneous interests should be measured in years, not weeks' (Bisson *et al.* 1997, p. 25).

For community organisations to be sustainable they need to be assured of dependable incomes to finance their activities and sustain community interest (Guiang 2001b). The community forestry programs have not yet achieved this. Initial community forestry programs focussed on the reforestation of cleared land with communities not given access to residual forest resources until the mid 1990s. Communities received income through contracts to plant areas but they frequently have had to wait long periods for payment. This meant some ended up worse-off than before because they had neglected other farming activities (Donoghue 1999). Communities without access to residual forests have few resources to use for development activities (Guiang 2001b).

Community organisations are required to submit plans of their proposed activities before planting areas as well as obtain harvesting permits and transport permits if they wish to remove or harvest any trees. Revision of plans also requires DENR approval (Donoghue 1999). The process to obtain approval for these plans and permits is time consuming and complex, requiring knowledge of how to carry out timber inventories and harvesting plans as well as knowledge about how to deal with bureaucracies and legal commitments that are new to many community members. Donoghue (1999) observed that the time taken to have work and site plans approved for the pilot sites of the CBFM program was on average four years, even with assistance of NGOs, the DENR and others. Although the processes required for approval of community forestry programs were simplified in 1996 (Donoghue 1999), and continue to be revised (Emtage 2004), the procedures are still too complex for most community organisations.

### **The Role of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources**

The Forest Management Bureau within the DENR has primary responsibility for the management of the 15 M ha of classified forestland in the Philippines, 50% of the nation's total land area. The department was formed in 1987 to bring natural resource management in line with the new constitution, taking over management of forestland from the Bureau of Forest Development (Guiang 2001a). The DENR manages all the programs under the CBFM program except the Low Income Upland Community Program (LIUCP) and Regional Resources Management Program (RRMP), which are regionally-based programs, and the Integrated Social Forestry Program (ISFP) which, apart from the maintenance of single demonstration sites in each province by DENR, are presently under management of the Local Government Units.

The DENR plays a number of roles in the community forestry program. It is responsible for reviewing and approving the site plans and annual work plans of CBFM program participants, as well as being responsible for issuing all timber harvesting and transport permits. The DENR is also responsible for providing information and training about revegetation and timber production techniques. It is a

partner in many of the CBFMAs, having signed production sharing agreements with communities. DENR has the responsibility of resolving conflicting forestland claims, for example between indigenous and migrant groups and between private industries and communities (La Vina 1999). They are also mandated to play the role of a facilitator for developing partnerships between communities, private companies and local governments. In some cases the DENR provides support staff who act as the community organisers for CBFM projects.

The majority of ISFP sites were devolved to the Local Government Units in 1992 as part of a broader move to decentralise power and control of political processes from national to local government agencies (La Vina 1999). The DENR retained control of the ISFP pilot sites in each province, to serve as training centres for other CBFM projects. The DENR is still the primary agency in charge of forest management, being ultimately responsible for approval of permits that allow activities to occur, with the Local Government Units (LGUs) working as secondary agencies. Policies are in place to transfer greater responsibility for community forestry to the LGUs, with the DENR's role now to train the LGUs for this responsibility and oversee the LGU operations to ensure they are consistent with national and regional policies (La Vina 1999). Discussions with personnel from LGUs in Leyte Province by the author in 2003 and 2004 revealed that there is still considerable confusion about the nature of the policies and the potential role of LGUs in community forestry programs (Emtage 2004).

Following reorganisation in 1987, the DENR also took responsibility as a development agency for the management of forests for people living in upland areas. The DENR staff in forestry mostly came from the former Bureau of Forest Development, the agency that administered Timber License Agreements (TLAs). The changing paradigm of forest management in the Philippines greatly affected both the administrators and the field staff in the department. They were no longer dealing with commercial timber operations of a small number of large companies, but with a large number of small communities and families. Their relationship with the upland communities was greatly altered from having the responsibility of stopping these communities from illegal kaingin farming<sup>1</sup>, to the responsibility of assisting in community development. It has been recognized that these changes take time to settle and require the retraining of DENR staff to adapt to their new position as 'change agents' rather than 'controllers' (Pulhin 1998, Tesoro 1999). Some communities still fear the involvement of DENR staff in their lives, remembering their role as forest police (Bisson *et al.* 1997, Tesoro 1999). Having watched operators of timber concessions flout the regulation of logging practices – including the bribing of corrupt officials – for years, many of the forest-based communities do not trust the DENR. In other cases their trust has been undermined by more recent experiences in trying to get the DENR to take action over illegal logging.

Another leftover from the management of large Timber License Agreements is that the DENR still requires virtually the same paperwork from communities wishing to undertake forestry activities as they had from the TLA companies. These requirements have been criticised by reviewers of the programs on the grounds that they are too expensive, complex and time consuming for the small-scale operations of communities (Bisson *et al.* 1997, Pulhin 1998, Tesoro 1999, Guiang 2001c). The

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<sup>1</sup> Kaingin farming refers to swidden, or slash and burn cultivation practices.

insistence on detailed site plans and timber inventories for CBFMA areas, while neglecting to ensure community capacity building occurs, is thought by some to be indicative of the DENR failure to reset their focus from commercial timber production to community development (Pulhin 1998, Donoghue 1999). It is apparent that the national office of the DENR is attempting to reduce the administrative burdens on community organisations imposed by the current regulations. Considerable uncertainty remains about the details of these bureaucratic requirements however, and it is apparent that they are not consistently applied across a region or even within individual provinces (Emtage 2004).

Some researchers have emphasised that DENR field staff suffer low morale for a combination of reasons. These include their changed responsibilities, a lack of specific training, a lack of funding to support their tasks, and the lack of a clear career path in community forestry (Bisson *et al.* 1997, Pulhin 1999, Guiang 2001). It is not uncommon for DENR community forestry staff to even lack funding for the use of public transport to visit the communities they are meant to support (Bisson *et al.* 1997, UNFAO FMBDENR 2003). The policies guiding the DENR operations have changed on numerous occasions in the 1980s and 1990s, from a pro-logging orientation to one requiring strict control on commercial logging, the development of community forestry programs and finally, devolution of responsibilities to LGUs (Utting 2000, p. 201). These constant changes in work practices have contributed to the low morale within the organisation.

The lack of stability of policies in relation to forestry has been mentioned as a continuing problem for forestry development. The regulations surrounding the awarding of contracts and other requirements by the DENR have also changed frequently over the last 15 years (UNAC 1992, Hyde *et al.* 1996, La Vina 1999). One example is when the Secretary of the DENR placed a ban on processing logging applications from CBFM areas in 1998. This led to considerable hardship for some communities that had invested in small sawmills or in other ways relied on income from timber processing and sales (Teroso 1999). While some see the provision of a stable regulatory environment as a part of DENR's role in the development of community forestry (UNAC 1992, Hyde *et al.* 1996, Teroso 1999), it should be noted that the failure to provide a stable policy and regulatory environment for forestry development ultimately rests with the National Government. Successive administrations have failed to pass legislation that would remove the inconsistencies and omissions of the current forest management legislation (UNFAO FMBDENR 2003).

Given their central role in the administration of the CBFM as well as their other roles as a development agency and business partner it is vital that the DENR establish and maintain an effective information, education and communication program. Most landholders and LGU officials in Leyte are unaware of the basic land tenure and CBFM regulations and there are considerable differences in the mode of operation of various DENR sub-regional offices (Emtage 2004).

### **The Role of Non-Government Organisations**

Non-government organisations can potentially act in three roles as part of the CBFM program, namely undertaking research and development of livelihood projects, being legal and political advocates for communities, and as assistance providers through providing community organisers, planting materials and support for the



development of alternative livelihood enterprises (Quesblatin 1994, Donoghue 1999).

As research and development organisations, NGOs have developed alternative and sustainable farming systems for upland farmers, an example being the Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Centre which developed the Sloping Land Agricultural Technology system or SALT. SALT was one of the main technologies promoted to farmers in the ISFP in the 1980s (Watson and Laquihon 1986). The Ford Foundation is another NGO that has made investments into developing sustainable upland farming practices and innovative, multidisciplinary approaches for working with farmers (Ford Foundation 1998).

The provision of services to communities, particularly acting as community organisers or running nurseries to distribute seedlings to farmers and communities, are vital parts of the CBFM program, and the input of NGOs is highly valued by communities and other participants (Nixon *et al.* 2001).

NGOs play a vital role as advocates for upland communities trying to protect their landholdings and forest areas from illegal logging activities and from local powerful interests who occasionally lay claim to their land and tree resources. In one community visited by the author, community members had reported 17 cases of illegal logging to DENR in their CBFM area but none of these incidents were pursued by DENR. On the 18<sup>th</sup> occasion, the community enlisted the support of a legal advocacy NGO and was able to follow the case through three court hearings, without DENR support. This was the first time in the province and possibly the nation that a community organisation successfully prosecuted illegal loggers.

There are thousands of NGOs in the Philippines and networking is seen as a way for disparate organisations to improve their impact on development activities. Quesblatin (1994) estimated that 3,000 of the approximately 20,000 Philippine NGOs and people's organisations are members of 10 main networks. The 10 networks combined to form an umbrella organisation called the Caucus of Development NGO Network (CODE-NGO) in 1991. The umbrella organisation was established to have a greater impact on development, to avoid having to set-up a 'mega' NGO, and to avoid trying to organise groups with widely varying philosophical leanings (Quesblatin 1994, p. 6). It was also established to: prevent undue 'co-option' by government; safeguard the security of NGO workers; optimise the sharing of talents, skills and lessons; experiment with new development approaches; strengthen regional alliances; create successor generations of leaders, and achieve more effective advocacy (Quesblatin 1994, p. 6, citing Constantino-David 1991).

The Upland NGO Assistance Committee is the peak body of upland development NGOs that monitors the activities of NGOs working on projects in upland areas. This body provides training for NGO staff and makes recommendations about the modification of programs to national government agencies, as well as to international aid and lending institutions, to improve their development projects (del Castillo 1992, Quesblatin 1994). The Upland NGO Assistance Committee has recognised and accredited some NGOs as capable of providing community capacity-building services. Such accreditation is important to overcome the possibility of NGOs being set up by corrupt officials to 'milk' development funding, but with no intentions of fulfilling all their obligations. The Upland Development Working Group (UDWG), which was established to guide the Integrated Social Forestry

Program, is an early example of a NGO/university/DENR body that had an important influence on the direction of community forestry in the Philippines in the 1980s (Quesblatin 1994). Another NGO network is the Asia-wide Consortium on Peoples Participation in Environmentally Sustainable Development (SEACON).

More recently a series of groups have formed, known as the Regional Distillation Groups, which aim to bring local DENR officials and NGOs together quarterly to discuss and troubleshoot local issues. Recurrent issues are sent to the DENR head office for assessment. The South East Asian Sustainable Forest Management Network (SEA-SFMN) is another group linking R&D organisations in four South East Asian countries, coordinated by the Centre for South East Asian studies at the Berkeley campus of the University of California (Quesblatin 1994, p. 16).

At present the most powerful interaction for creating policy reforms between Philippine NGOs and the government is through the Presidential Council for Sustainable Development, which has members drawn from NGOs as well as cabinet officials. In 1994, 17 NGOs combined to form the NGOs for Integrated Protected Areas (NIPA). This group accessed funding from the World Bank administered Global Environment Fund to establish the first 10 Integrated Protected Areas in the Philippines (Quesblatin 1994).

### **The Role of International Aid and Lending Agencies**

Funding from large aid and lending agencies including the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, USAID, GTZ and the Ford Foundation have, through their provision of funds, played a large part in the development of the CBFM program. Most rural Filipinos are still dependent on agricultural production and have few opportunities to take up work in non-agricultural industries (de los Angeles 2000). Successive national governments from the 1940s to the 1980s relied on the wealth of natural resources and the modernisation of agricultural practices, failing to develop a strong industrial base that could potentially support the population. Successive Philippine governments have recognised the need to give management of upland areas to the local communities, but they have lacked the funding to pay for the community capacity-building and support for tree establishment necessary to ensure that the land and forest areas managed by the communities are developed in a sustainable manner. Tesoro (1999) discussed the major challenges facing the Philippines as the lending agencies, that have funded a large proportion of the CBFM programs, are coming to the end of their funding commitments. Similarly, Pulhin (1998) noted that the DENR Community Forestry Program Office has expressed concern that 'the enormous financial and technical assistance given to foreign-funded community-based projects make them non-replicable and thus not sustainable' (National CFP Coordinating Office 1996, p. 289, cited in Pulhin 1998, p. 9).

The roles of the funding agencies have been to supply capital to run reforestation programs, to provide expert analysis or capital for employing experts to analyse the success of programs, and to provide analysis of institutional arrangements affecting forestry and reforestation activities. In some cases, the loan and development agencies have used the funding of programs to pressure the national government to reform agencies, as happened with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japanese government support for reforestation projects in the early 1990s. The funding from the ADB was dependent on the preparation of a Master Plan for

Forestry, which was in turn funded by the Finnish Government (Teroso 1999).

It is argued in the Revised Master Plan for Forestry (UNFAO FMBDENR 2003) and by Utting (2000) that, when designing and administering programs, international donor organisations have failed to coordinate their efforts, or adequately consider the institutional capacity of the DENR. Utting (2000) argued that the widespread failure in empowering communities is partly due to the agenda of international donors who direct the policies of the national government. Utting argued that these policies have resulted in the commercialisation of community organising, with contracts specifying unrealistic time limits for the activity, the time requirements of which are not predictable. For example, in the National Forestation Program (NFP) in the early 1990s, 20,000 contracts covering 225,000 ha were awarded in three years. This haste in the NFP, driven by the agenda of the international donors, meant that '...serious administrative problems arose ... (and) the delicate, complex and often lengthy processes that are crucial for securing the foundations for participatory development were largely ignored.' (Utting 2000, p. 177). Utting (2000, p. 177) further quotes Korten (1994, p. 977) who stated in regards to the DENR that '...to expect an agency to reforest each year an area larger than it had reforested in its previous seventy one year history seems patently unrealistic'.

Most of the funding agencies provide capital with conditions attached, with the result that the programs using those funds are all slightly different from each other. While it is useful to have a variety of approaches for experimentation, there can be negative consequences. The variation in programs can have the effect of confusing DENR staff and communities, particularly when, for example, one program may support wages for communities to revegetate an area while a neighbouring community under a separate program does not receive the same funding (Teroso 1999, p. 18). Part of the problem is that the CBFM sub-programs are run from different offices and the DENR has not integrated these into a uniform design (UNFAO FMBDENR 2003).

### **The Role of Local Government Units**

The administrative areas of Local Government Units (LGUs) are municipalities each of which cover a number of barangays<sup>2</sup>. Their responsibility for forest and natural resource management has been increased in the past 10 years in an effort to decentralise power in the Philippines, to allow local self-determination, and to facilitate the use of local knowledge to treat local problems and issues. The LGUs have gained increased responsibility for environmental management but their activities are still subject to approval of the DENR (Lu 1998, La Vina 1999). The LGUs are expected to initiate CBFMAs, support CBFMAs financially and technically, incorporate CBFMAs into local land-use planning schemes, maintain protected areas, and catch and charge those who violate forest protection laws (La Vina 1999). Some DENR staff have been transferred to LGUs to provide support for community forestry programs. Unfortunately, the increased responsibilities of LGUs have not been matched by increased budgetary allocations. The ability of LGUs to draft their own policies is strictly limited, and the DENR still retains control over key decisions, including the issuing of harvesting permits (Lu 1998, La Vina 1999).

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<sup>2</sup> A barangay is the smallest area of government in the Philippines and in rural areas usually encompasses a number of sitios, or small hamlets of dwellings.

LGUs are supposed to be consulted in the preparation of applications for CBFMAs. However a number of municipal administrations have claimed they only hear about CBFMAs when difficulties arise (Emtage 2004). They have the responsibility to check the boundaries of proposed areas and recommend areas for agreements to the DENR. The lack of tenure mapping in many areas and boundary markers for national parks, forest reserves and wildlife sanctuaries increases the difficulties of this task (de los Angeles 2000). LGUs have a role to play in developing partnerships between communities and private industries (Guiang 2001b). In addition, LGUs in rural areas employ Municipal Agricultural Officers whose role is to provide extension about agriculture-related matters to farmers. These officers in some LGUs also provide advice to communities about community forestry programs.

### **The Role of Research Organisations in Community Forestry Programs**

A variety of international and national research institutions have helped to develop community forestry in the Philippines. Their roles have been to train forestry professionals in social and community forestry practices, provide analysis of existing and potential programs, trial forestry programs in various communities, and act as advocates for the development of community forestry. International research agencies that have been active in the Philippines include the World Agroforestry Centre (formerly known as the International Centre for Agroforestry Research, ICRAF), the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). Researchers have been employed by funding agencies including the World Bank, the Ford Foundation and USAID to analyse the operations of community forestry programs (La Vina 1999 Bisson *et al.* 1997, Johnson 1997, Guiang 2001a). University-based researchers were members of the Upland Development Working Group that was formed in the early 1980s to recommend means to establish social forestry programs. This group later acted as an important forum for discussion and development of community forestry programs. Together with NGOs, the actions of Philippine researchers in developing and trialling social and community forestry projects in the 1970s provided a basis for the later development of national programs (Cuevas 1979, Aguilar 1982, Aguilar 1986, Mariano 1986, Borlagdan 1987, Gonzal 1988).

The first forestry school in the Philippines was established in Los Baños in 1910 by the American administration concerned about the sustainability of forestry operations. This school is now part of the University of the Philippines and the campus at Los Baños has grown to become the largest agricultural university in the country. The forestry school has a Department of Social and Community Forestry which, since the 1970s, has undertaken research into the operation and impact of community forestry programs and has provided policy advice to decision-makers. In 1996 there were 37 tertiary level forestry schools in the Philippines (Lu 1998). The Institute for Philippine Culture at Ateneo de Manila University, and de la Salle University in Manila have also had a major impact on development of community forestry.

### **The Role of Industry Groups in Community Forestry Programs**

The CBFM program allows natural resources to be sustainably developed or exploited by the community in a partnership with governments or private industry. Private industry has the capacity to assist communities greatly in terms of silvicultural and timber processing knowledge, plus access to markets and finances. It is the role of DENR and LGUs to facilitate linkages between community groups and private organisations.

In the past, the Industrial Forestry Management Program was used to facilitate the establishment and management of large-scale timber plantations. The cancellation of this program stemmed from difficulties in financing the agreements, and conflicts of interest between community groups and private companies over access to forest areas (La Vina 1999). Some industry spokespeople have argued that the continual rewriting of forest management regulations has seriously affected the willingness of private industry to invest in Philippine forestry (Lu 1998). Like the spokespeople for the community groups involved in forestry activities, the industry groups have argued that the current administrative requirements for timber harvesting are too complex and subject to long delays to allow private investors to undertake investments (Lu 1998).

The result of the difficulties described above is that there are currently few successful partnership agreements between industry groups and communities. With LGUs largely uninformed about the implications of the CBFM program they are clearly not in a position to facilitate such partnerships.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Philippine government has supported the development of community forestry and encouraged smallholders to plant trees in an effort to promote social justice and livelihood support for millions of impoverished landless Filipinos that moved to upland areas, and indigenous communities who have always lived in forest regions. Many Filipinos are convinced that the only sustainable means to manage upland areas is to empower the communities that live in or adjacent to these areas. These communities utilise the upland areas despite regulations that had banned farming of publicly-owned lands. In some cases this was because they never recognised the government's ownership of these lands. In other cases they had no choice because they were unable to support themselves in the competitive and overcrowded lowland areas.

The strategy employed by successive Philippine governments has been to provide individuals, households and communities with some security of tenure, and assistance with livelihood programs, in the hope that this will be sufficient to inspire them to establish sustainable farming practices and protect their lands from illegal logging. Community forestry has come to the point where communities have agreements with the government giving them management rights over more than 5 M ha of land in the Philippines. Yet the policies and agreements are not sufficient to ensure sustainable management of the natural resources of the Philippines on their own, with time required to change the culture within government organisations, and develop the management capacity of communities and government agencies alike.

A number of issues constrain the development of small-scale and community

forestry in the Philippines. *Political and institutional issues* include instability in the policies and regulations relating to forestry, inconsistencies in the separation of responsibilities and resource allocation between local and national governments, bribe-taking by government officials, and the variable political support for community forestry among government agencies. *Financial issues* include the lack of government funds to support community forestry programs, the high degree of reliance on funds from international sources, poor infrastructure in rural areas, and the lack of development of markets for small-scale forestry. Among *social issues* are lack of trust between rural communities and government agencies, difficulties in establishing and maintaining community organisations, and in many cases the lack of experience of community partnerships and cooperation. *Environmental issues* include the degraded condition of lands and forests that communities now manage, which increases the difficulty of successfully establishing and managing trees in these areas and limits the potential to extract resources from them.

The many different stakeholder groups involved in the community-based forestry program each have a different role to play. Effective communication between these stakeholder groups is vital for the success of the program, yet it is apparent that many of the groups are not aware of the activities of the others and are uncertain about their own roles (Emtage 2004). Despite the existence of multiple stakeholder forums such as the Regional Distillation Groups, the rules and regulations that govern the program remain a mystery to most stakeholders, including many sub-provincial level DENR officials. The involvement of a number of government departments in forest land management issues, including DENR, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Agrarian Reform as well as the LGUs, emphasises the need for their activities to be coordinated to avoid duplication and conflict. Further complicating the situation, there are at least 12 separate pieces of legislation that are applicable to operations of the CBFM program (UNFAO FMBDENR 2003, p. 18). The leadership by the national government is urgently required to stabilise the policies relating to the program and provide a comprehensive information, education and communication campaign to support CBFM.

The problem of corruption and tolerance of illegal activities is widespread in the Philippines and is seen as official policy by people on-the-ground. Forest policy in the Philippines is still effectively based on Presidential Directive (PD) 705, issued in 1975, though with numerous subsequent modifications. There is a need to reformulate forest policy to make it internally consistent and operational. As observed in the *Revised Master Plan for Forestry*:

The forestry related policy and institutions/instruments in Philippines have not been stable, characterised by frequent changes. What is written as policy is meant to be practiced; and policies are to be changed only for very valid reasons. Moreover, policy, for a common person, is what is practiced, not what is written on a paper. If policies as written are not practiced, then by reflection what is practiced becomes policy. That is how in many situations/countries the 'real' policy is one of tolerating illegal activities and corruption, not in forestry alone, but in most sectors. Therefore, there is no point in saying that 'the policies are good, but the problem is in poor implementation'. Institutional efficiency is in practicing what is preached. Organisational structure and mission, legal instruments (rules and regulations) and plans and programmes are strategic elements in implementing a policy. When these elements fail to achieve the policy objectives, the clear indications, often, are that

these strategic elements need changes (modification, re-orientation or replacement). There may also be the need to change, clarify and/or re-iterate the policies. That seems to be the situation, now in the Philippines. (UNFAO FMBDENR 2003, p. 148).

The DENR has been criticised for the manner in which they administer their duties. This said, it should also be recognised that the DENR is responsible for administering the policies of the national government, and the government position on forestry has fluctuated greatly since 1987 (Utting 2000). It is difficult for an organisation to continually reorientate their programs to make operational the frequent changes to forest and land management regulations by national government administrations. In a review of policies and programs designed to achieve sustainable forest management in the Philippines, Cassells *et al.* came to a similar conclusion to that of UNFAO FMBDENR (2003) about the need for reform of the forestland management policy framework, stating that:

Over time, there has been a clear devolution of responsibility to the LGUs for various aspects of forest management. However, there now appears to be considerable overlap of responsibilities between the various levels of government and this is creating both confusion and frustration amongst various stakeholder groups.

There is clearly an incompletely defined working framework governing the work of various levels of government, people's organisations, indigenous people's organizations and nongovernmental organisations, and this reduces both the transparency and the acceptability of forest management and planning processes. (Cassells *et al.* 2002, p. 10).

## SUMMARY

While the Philippines is recognised as a world leader in policies on community forestry, reviewers of the programs have cautioned that many operational issues need to be addressed before these policies translate into sustainable community empowerment and development (Bisson *et al.* 1996, Johnson 1997, Utting 2000, Guiang 2001b). This paper demonstrates that there are many stakeholders involved in forestry in the Philippines and many challenges confronting the successful operation of community forestry programs and the development of smallholder forestry. In order to achieve the goals which have been established for the CBFM program, considerable cooperation and communication between a variety of 'actors' or stakeholders is required. Each of these stakeholders plays a distinct role in the program and each has strengths and weaknesses that affect their capacity to fulfil their part. Fundamental problems for those involved in the program are the lack of continuity in resources to support program implementation, the economically and socially marginalised position of rural communities, and the underdeveloped nature of the institutional framework in which the program operates. The way that the stakeholders involved in the program cooperate to respond to these challenges will be critical to ensure its effectiveness.

Researchers from all organisations have constantly stressed the need to focus on community empowerment and participatory methods as the key to developing successful community forestry (Cuevas 1979, Aguilar 1982, Gonzal 1988, Cernea

1992). The challenge for expansion of community forestry projects in the Philippines goes far beyond teaching communities about sustainable silvicultural practices. Without adequate livelihood support, people will continue to utilise the remaining forest resources at an unsustainable rate. Without direct benefits from forest areas, communities will not protect forests from clearing or illegal cutting. Without development of health services, sustainable agricultural systems, enterprise management skills, and faith in the security of their tenure and market access, they will not be able to move out of the cycle of slash and burn or kaingin farming to sustain themselves. Although institutional reform is still required to reduce transaction costs for communities, the capacity building or 'empowerment' of highly marginalised upland communities appears to be an even more fundamental factor to the success and sustainability of community forestry in the Philippines.

As Guiang concluded, the ideas behind the CBFM program are sound in theory, but this is not sufficient to make the program effective; there remain many issues to be dealt with in practice:

Almost a century of private sector plunder of the forests and forest resources could not easily be turned around by policy pronouncements and enactment. The implementation of the IPRA (Indigenous Peoples Resource Act) law has yet to be fully funded. CBFM ... has yet to be translated into economic benefits at the grassroots level and into bureaucratic commitments to 'empower' communities as they protect and manage their forest and forest lands. Without these, CBFM continues to be an ideal to be dreamed of and a passing development fad without touching the lives of the poor and marginalised upland communities and indigenous peoples. (Guiang 2001b, p. 44).

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